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**Hylocichla ustulata.** Russet-backed Thrush. The song of this bird was heard among the leafless willows at Caleb, June 13, at dusk which is the favorite hour for its concerts. An hour was spent in vain effort to stalk this wary fellow in order to make the identification absolute. The failure was most unfortunate as the song and call note were both slightly different from that of this species in Berkeley.

**Merula m. propinqua.** Western Robin. This was one of the first species noted May 24. In full song at The Dalles about the yards in town. May 25, Cherry Creek hill—"Robins have been common all along the road; they are probably nesting already." May 30, Bridge Creek—"A nest was observed in low bush by roadside; contained four large young. It was so near the road as to enable one to look into it easily from the saddle without turning from his course." These birds were quite plentiful in the sage of Bridge Creek, where they fed upon a small caterpillar found there. We observed them at all points on the road and in all sorts of country up to the pine belt at Spanish Gulch. At the Cove they were observed feeding on cicadas on dry hillsides.

**Sialia m. occidentalis.** Western Bluebird. This species was abundant in flocks with large young among the pines above the Lower Basin. June 27.

**Sialia arctica.** Mountain Bluebird. A single specimen was observed at Currant Creek hill on May 29, and one other at base of the fossil beds on Bridge Creek, June 3.

*Berkeley, California.*

### Nesting Habits of the Caracara

ADOLPH E. SCHUTZE

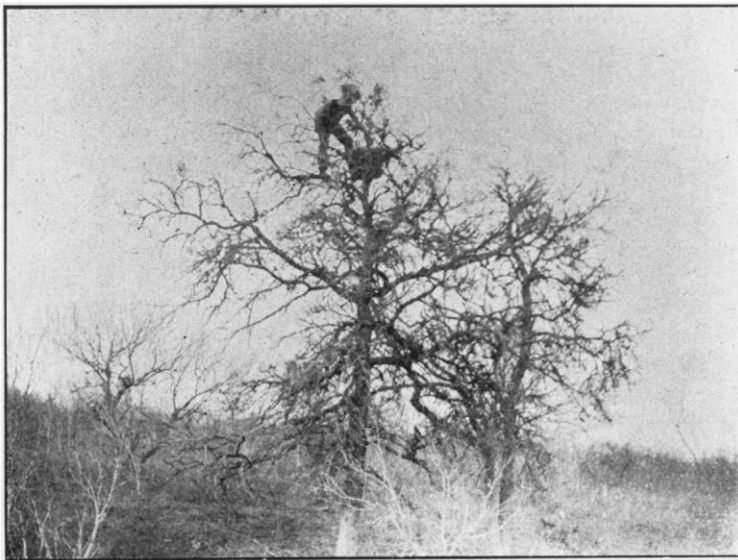
THE caracara, (*Polyborus cheriway*) is an abundant bird throughout southeast Texas. Since it came under my observation, about five years ago, I have paid considerable attention to its nesting habits and food. It has been my good fortune in recent years annually to make extensive trips into the surrounding country, namely Travis, Bastrop and Caldwell counties, thus enabling me to become quite familiar with the general habits of the bird. This peculiar creature possesses both the characteristics of a hawk and vulture, but is more frequently seen in company with the latter. Its flight resembles that of neither hawk nor vulture, but is very straight and rapid and I am inclined to believe that it will often go many miles for its food. On a hot summer's day it can sometimes be seen circling high overhead after the manner of a hawk.

In central Texas it is also abundant, and is met with everywhere in open country, especially in chaparral and mesquite regions where food abounds and is easy to secure. The prairies which comprise vast areas of this great state are covered in most parts by a dwarf growth of mesquite, and distributed among these are elm, oak and hackberry trees of normal height, which afford good nesting places. I have found them breeding in heavy timbered creek bottoms, but on few occasions.

Its food consists of a vast amount of carrion, lizards, small snakes, various rodents and the cotton-tail rabbit. This rabbit is abundant throughout the chaparral regions of the state, and I can safely say that it forms about one-half the diet of this bird. Occasionally the remains of a rabbit is found in the bird's nest. I have often seen it in company with vultures while feeding on carrion, and on sever-

al occasions it has been seen feeding on the refuse that had been thrown out of the slaughter houses on the outskirts of the city. It does not seem to fear the presence of man and not infrequently are nests found in close vicinity of country dwellings.

Most of my observations were made in Caldwell county which consists principally of rolling prairie, intersected by numerous small streams, the banks of which are sparingly fringed with elm and hackberry trees. Here the birds may be found throughout the year. The birds are usually in pairs the year round, but sometimes during the winter months they can be seen in flocks of four and five. Nesting begins in February and early March, at which time both birds can be seen flying about together in search of a nesting site. Two and sometimes three broods are reared in a season, as nesting begins very early. The earliest recorded date that I have, is March 1, when I took a beautiful set of three eggs from a new nest in Caldwell county. The nest was composed entirely of broom-weeds without a lining and was constructed during the months of December, January and the first few days of February. The eggs were slightly incubated when found, and I am sure



COLLECTING EGGS OF THE CARACARA

I could have procured them a week earlier had I been aware of the fact. This would unquestionably have made the earliest nesting date for this section of the state. A nest of former years to which is added a few straws, is usually selected in which to rear their young and seldom is a new nest found. I think the greater number of the new nests are built by birds of the previous year, they being unable to procure old ones. Some, however, are built by birds that are molested too often and finally give up their old homes in despair. Some birds become so attached to their nests that they return each year, even after having been robbed time and again. New material is added yearly to the old nest, so that in course of time it becomes a huge and massive structure, and when conspicuously situated, which is generally the case, can be seen at a great distance.

One particular nest, that I now call to mind was found about six years ago in Caldwell county in a small elm on the crest of a high hill. When first found the nest was fully three feet in height and two and one-half feet in breadth. For some

unknown cause it was deserted and being exposed to the wind and weather soon decreased in size until now it is a mere platform of sticks, but still a relic of former days. Probably some day it will be repaired and made use of.

The nest is usually placed in the upright branches of an elm or oak, eight to fifty feet above the ground. Of the thirty-five nests that I have so far found, two-thirds are yearly reoccupied, but whether by the same pair of birds, I am unable to say. The birds are always careful in selecting a position where they are enabled to view the entire surrounding country with ease. When an intruder approaches, the parent immediately leaves without the slightest noise and is lost to view for a time. After a short while it returns with its mate and both alight on some nearby tree and watch the proceedings with much interest. Sometimes they will even alight on the same tree that contains the nest, while the intruder is examining the same. Again I have seen both birds flying about overhead, constantly uttering a loud guttural sound. Of the thirty-five nests that have come under my observation, thirty were composed solely of broomweed and without a lining, two were built of broomweeds and small briars, while the remaining three were built of various substances, such as corn husks, small sticks, broomweed, mesquite twigs and the like. Sometimes old nests of hawks are appropriated, and to these are added a few broomstraws, or weeds. Two and three eggs are laid, two being the usual complement. Surely few hawk, eagle, or vulture eggs present a greater diversity in coloration. The usual color is a light brown, which is marbled and clouded with various shades of darker brown. Some eggs are solid brown, some have a light chocolate ground, spotted and clouded with various shades of darker brown, and again I have seen eggs of a rich reddish brown. If washed in water when fresh they will readily lose color, and become a dirty white. On one occasion I found a nest containing two eggs of this species which were almost white. They had been exposed to much rain for the entire coloring was washed off. Incubation was well advanced and on this account I was unable to preserve them. Three eggs in my cabinet collected March 1, 1902, have a light brown ground color spotted, streaked and clouded with a darker shade of brown. They measure respectively 2.19 by 1.74; 2.23 by 1.82; 2.12 by 1.82 inches. The picture accompanying this article was taken by the writer in April 1902 in Caldwell county. The nest contained one fresh egg, which was left undisturbed and after two days a full set was secured.

These birds do not thrive in captivity. I saw two in San Pedro Park, in San Antonio, last summer. They were in a very small cage and though full grown were much smaller than the birds which are at liberty. They were very active, and watched with much interest the people that were passing by.

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Two Unusual Birds at Stanford University, Cal.**—At the May meeting of the Cooper Club, Prof. John O. Snyder of Stanford University, exhibited a specimen and nest and eggs of the Sierra junco (*Junco h. thurberi*) which he had secured in the Stanford Arboretum. The nest was built between the loose bark and the trunk of an eucalyptus, several feet from the ground, a quite unusual position for a junco. One would naturally expect to find the Point Pinos junco, if any; but this specimen, compared with the type of the latter species turns out to be the inland bird. The other junco of the pair, or perhaps there is a little colony, was seen by the writer all through the spring, and as late as July 11, when it was observed perched head downward, drinking from a hydrant.

In the last issue of this magazine a little note was inserted stating that an olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus borealis*) had taken up residence in the Stanford Arboretum. This bird, or